Dear Alice,

I am trying to lose weight. Is snacking on "unsalted soybeans" a good idea? I know they have carbohydrates and do contain calories from fat... But can this snacking two or three times a day derail any weight loss attempts? Thanks for your help.

Macduff

Answer

Dear Macduff,

It's possible that snacking on soybeans could derail your weight loss efforts? it all depends on how much you're munching, and what else you're eating during the day. No one food will completely derail your diet; it's the balance of calories eaten and calories burned over an extended period of time that makes a difference in weight loss or weight gain.

While soybeans contribute valuable nutrients - plant chemicals known to lower cholesterol, and vitamins and minerals, such as calcium, potassium, and folate - they are a somewhat concentrated source of calories from protein, carbohydrate, and fat. If you're consuming soy nuts (roasted soybeans), the serving size listed on most containers is one ounce. In reality, this is a little over two tablespoons (slightly bigger than a ping pong ball). If you're eating edamame (boiled green soybeans), the typical serving size is three ounces (1/2 cup) of just the beans themselves (without the pods). When snacking on one serving of soy nuts or edamame, you're taking in about 130 calories and if you're having this much three times a day, that's about 400 calories in soybeans alone. Serving size is important, too, because if you're indulging in more like a generous handful or two of soy nuts, you could be doubling your caloric intake, just for a snack.

Try measuring the portion you usually eat to figure out exactly how much you're enjoying. Frequently, we're surprised with what we see when we actually weigh or measure our food; often it's a lot more than the serving size listed on the package! While it may not be a good idea to weigh and measure your food at every meal, sometimes, it's helpful just to get a sense of how much we're really eating.

When it comes to weight loss the healthier recommendation is to keep tabs on calories taken in, from all sources, and the calories expended (including exercise). Finding the right balance can help lead to a healthier weight and result in great energy. Some people find that having a
chat with a Registered Dietician can help clarify a healthier eating plan (for weight loss or just in general). Either way, you can enjoy your soybeans, but remember to enjoy plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains too!

Alice!

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